

POCKET PC
EXPERT

FAQ

Q How can I increase the memory capacity of my Pocket PC?

A There are some small companies, mostly in the USA, that offer to upgrade the memory of certain Pocket PC models, usually to 128MB or 256MB. It's not cheap, though, and involves sending away your handheld to have the new memory chips fitted. It will also invalidate your warranty.

If your internal memory is close to full, you can buy an add-on storage card to plug into its Secure Digital or CompactFlash expansion slot, and store some of your programs and files on that. A few applications require installation in internal memory rather than on a card, but this is explained in the installation instructions.

To install a storage card rather than internal memory, choose the card from ActiveSync's pop-up menu, which will appear during the software installation process.

Steve Clack

Handheld consultant,
trainer and editor

pocketpc@computershopper.co.uk

Protect your data

Carrying personal information on your handheld is useful, but also dangerous if it falls into the wrong person's hands while the data is unsecured. **Steve Clack** gets security conscious

Keeping your data secure on a Pocket PC is just as tedious as it is on a desktop computer, but it's every bit as important. Your PDA-based personal information is more likely to fall into the hands of unscrupulous people than data on your home PC. Therefore it's vital that you take reasonable precautions to avoid leaving your data open to anyone who might get their hands on your handheld.

The idea of data security covers two issues: keeping files safe from other people, and keeping files safe for you. For example, you might leave your Pocket PC on the bus or have it stolen from your desk at work, in which case your biggest worry is that all your information isn't password-protected. On the other hand, you might be working on an important document while on a train on your way to a meeting, only to have your handheld perform a spontaneous hard reset and lose all your data just before the train pulls into the station, which is exactly what happened to me a few months ago.

You need to make sure your private and personal information isn't left open so others can access it. You also need some way of performing at least occasional backups while on the move, so you can restore your data up to the last backup point without requiring access to your main PC.

SAFETY CONSCIOUS

All Pocket PCs come with basic password protection that locks the device until you enter a master password. However, a lot of users don't know about this feature,

and others find it too tedious to enter a password every time the handheld is switched on.

Think carefully about the information you keep on your handheld. If the only items you deem to be sensitive are bank account details, login passwords and the like, consider getting a secure storage application that can be used to stash away all such information in a special password-protected file. Almost all these programs have an automatic time lock feature, so the information will be securely hidden whenever you go a minute or so without tapping the screen. By preventing you leaving your private information exposed even by accident, such a program may be all you need. CryptoCard (www.pmmx.com.ar) is free, and there are plenty of commercial alternatives, such as eWallet (\$30, around £15, from www.iliunsoft.com). Both come with a PC companion program so you can enter and synchronise all your private passwords and access them on the desktop as well.

If you have a modest number of passwords you could, on Pocket PC 2002 or 2003, enter them and any other sensitive information into a Pocket Excel file and password-protect it. This feature has been inexplicably removed from Windows Mobile 5.0, so if you're running one of the latest Pocket PC models you'll have to go for a secure storage application instead.

For many of us, there's likely to be other information on our handhelds that we prefer to keep private, such as personal correspondence, emails and contact addresses. If so, the best option is either to use the built-in password protection that locks the entire device

Documents to go View PDFs on your Pocket PC

A lot of Pocket PC users get frustrated when they try to use Pocket Word/Word Mobile to access Microsoft Word documents while on the go. It's fine for basic documents, but anything beyond simple formatting tends to be stripped out, sometimes making the document unusable.

If you need to view files rather than edit them, you could convert them to Adobe's Portable Document Format (PDF) then copy the PDF file to your handheld. Ability Office, OpenOffice.org and Microsoft Office all allow you to save or print files to PDF.

There are several ways to view PDF files on Pocket PCs, but Adobe's own free reader (available from www.adobe.com) is hard to beat. Adobe's website mentions compatibility with Pocket PC 2002 or 2003, but we've found it works fine with Windows Mobile 5.0, too.

You won't be able to edit the PDF documents on your

handheld, but formatting from the original document should be pretty much intact, no matter how complex the original document. You'll also be able to search quickly through the text for specific words.

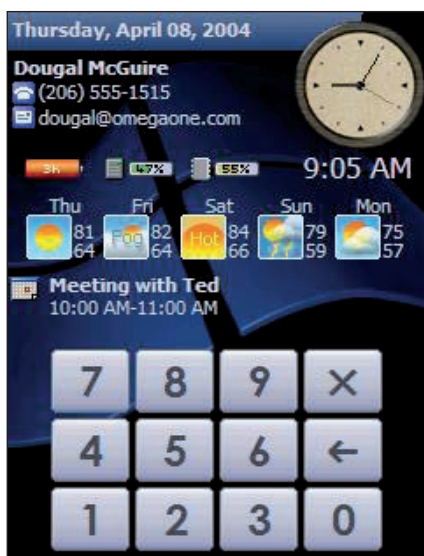
The 'convert to PDF' solution isn't limited to

Word documents and is a good way to get almost any important information into your handheld. If you find that the PDF files you're transferring to your handheld are too big, change the PDF settings on your PC to reduce the quality of the images, which will drop the file sizes enormously.

If you need to edit complex Word documents on your Pocket PC and resave them with all formatting intact, use TextMaker (\$50, around £26, from www.softmaker.com) instead of Pocket Word/Word Mobile. This contains almost all the functions of a full-blown desktop word processor.



▲ PDF keeps the formatting intact. This document is viewed using Adobe Reader



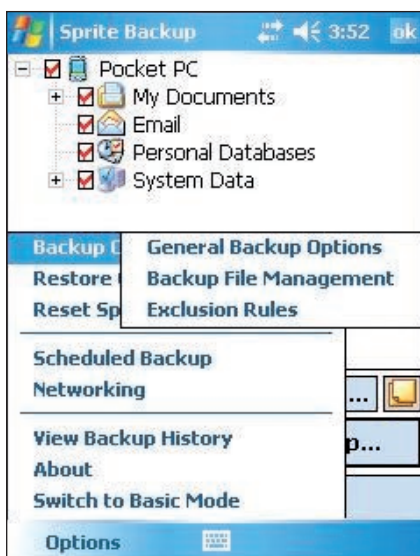
▲ 1-Pass manages your passwords and provides large finger-friendly buttons to enter them

or buy an add-on program that makes it a little less tedious to enter the password.

PERSONAL SERVICES

The built-in password system is accessed from the Personal tab of the Settings screen, which you can access from the Start menu. It lets you set a quick four-digit password or a longer mix of letters and numbers that make it much harder for anyone to guess the code. You can set the password protection to begin after a pre-set period of inactivity, but for maximum security you should set the 'Prompt if device unused for' option to 0 minutes, which tells the device to lock itself whenever you turn it off.

On Windows Mobile 5.0 models, there's a Today screen option that locks the screen as soon as you tap a little padlock icon on the screen, but don't confuse this with any kind of security feature. It's designed to stop you



▲ Sprite Backup will copy data on your handheld to a storage card

accidentally registering screen taps when the handheld is in your pocket or bag, and doesn't require a password to disable.

PAINLESS PASSWORDS

There is a quicker alternative to typing in a password every time you turn on your handheld. The application 1-Pass (\$30, around £15, from www.omegaone.com) lets you use any combination of keypresses on the four hardware application buttons – the ones below the screen – instead. If you prefer, you can also use a big, finger-friendly keypad to tap in password digits without pulling out the stylus. However, it's a little pricy and the current version isn't compatible with Windows Mobile 5.0 models.

Along similar lines, Pocket Secure (\$14, around £7, from www.totalpocketpc.com) has large onscreen buttons to enter your password, and works happily with Windows Mobile 5.0 as

well as older versions of the Pocket PC operating system. It has extra security features, such as performing a hard reset to erase all your data if an incorrect password is entered a set number of times. It can encrypt any files you specify (with 128-bit encryption) whenever the device is locked.

BACKUPS ON THE MOVE

With your private information protected from others, the biggest risk to your data is that you won't be able to access it yourself in the event of an unexpected hard reset or similar disaster. To save having to wait until your next ActiveSync connection to restore your programs and files, get a card backup utility that can save a copy of your system to an SD or CF memory card.

These programs are extremely reliable and most of them store a complete disk image, which means all your settings and preferences files will be restored. This also means that you shouldn't have to re-enter anything manually as your device will be restored to precisely the same state it was in when you did the last card backup. We would recommend running the card backup software at least once a day, or whenever you've entered a substantial amount of important information.

The only downside to card backup programs is that they take at least a few minutes to run, and they all require a soft reset on completion. The best backup programs can perform the reset automatically, though, and can be configured to perform a backup during the night, when the handheld isn't being used.

Some Pocket PCs come with a card backup utility included, so check in your Programs folder and read the instructions specific to your handheld. If you don't have one built in, Sprite Backup (\$30 from www.spritesoftware.com) is a good investment.

If your Pocket PC does suffer a hard reset, in our experience a card backup program can restore your data more quickly and more reliably than ActiveSync. ☑

FLEXMAIL FlexMail 2007



\$20 (around £10)

FlexMail, previously known as WebIS Mail, has always had many more features than the built-in Pocket PC email client. The new 2007 edition is better than ever, making it the most powerful email program for any handheld platform. The built-in Pocket PC email application is easy to use and integrates well with Microsoft Outlook, but still lacks many of the features you'd expect from a desktop email application. FlexMail 2007 plugs most, though not all, of the gaps.

The biggest benefit of FlexMail is its ability to view full HTML formatting for incoming messages, complete with images. Disappointingly, however, you still can't compose outgoing messages in HTML format. Brand new to this version is a superb spellchecker, which is much better than

the built-in version, and PC-style rules for better control of your messages.

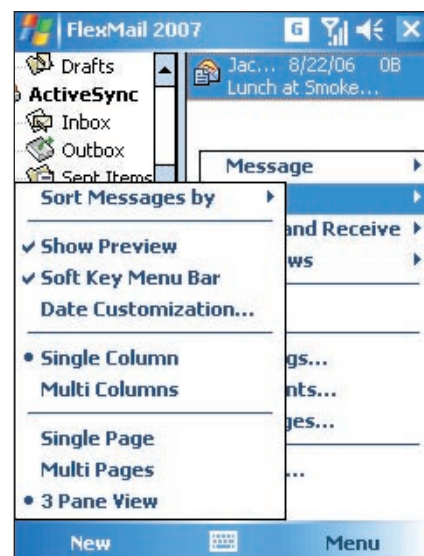
If you need to manage multiple email accounts, FlexMail's ability to operate different settings for each is a huge benefit, including the maximum message size to download for each account, where to store attachments and the intervals at which messages should be retrieved automatically. There's support for IMAP email accounts as well as POP3, and the software can be set up to view messages in a variety of multi-pane views, to make best use of the limited space available on the Pocket PC screen.

On Phone Edition Pocket PC devices, FlexMail 2007 also includes SMS text messaging. So if you're serious about mobile messaging, there's truly no better solution around, and it's a real bargain.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Support for incoming HTML messages
- ✓ More configurable options
- ✗ Can't compose outgoing HTML messages

SUPPLIER www.pocketinformant.com/uk



▲ All the features you need to manage email on a handheld are in FlexMail